



Stanford eCorner

Challenges Faced by Unitus

Geoff Davis, *Unitus*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1380/Challenges-Faced-by-Unitus>

Davis talks about one of the biggest challenges he faced with Unitus: coming into an established industry that has been successful and showing that things can be done differently and better.



Transcript

One of the biggest challenges we've faced is coming into an established industry that's been successful, that's been, this is the year the UN declared 2005 the year of microcredit or microfinancing. So it's been successful. It's done incredible things. It's helping millions of people around the world. Coming into an industry like that, that's doing incredibly well and doing incredible work in the world and to say, "This can be done better. This can be done differently." in trying to show a different perspective, trying to show a different possibility of this which is what we're trying to say that if these were to be converted and viewed as a business with an incredible social impact, then not millions would be helped but billions can be helped. And so, the first time I started giving speeches and talking to people in the industry and talking about what we wanted to do. Some of it was network skepticism. Some of them were saying, "Why haven't we ever thought about it like that before?" And now, so just going out trying to pick up dust and trying to show that things could be done differently and with all the inevitable friends that smile with one hand and you know get ready to be backstabbed in the back of the other hand. That's been one of the challenges.

Let me describe a little bit about what we've been able to accomplish. We've been doing this for about four years. We have a portfolio of seven partnerships right now around the world. They're collectively reaching almost 500,000 clients in four years. We don't hit that, they haven't hit it. Soon, they'll hit it the next couple of weeks 500,000 clients. They collectively employ about 1,200 people. They've got assets of \$40 million, etc. So just very quickly, we've established scale and as a counterpoint that may be fine. You save, how many do they have when you started working with them? When we started working with these seven-portfolio companies, they had 225,000 clients.

So again, a doubling effect very rapidly. So trying to do that and trying to show that it's been different or can be different, coming in as new kid on the block. You know, people say you're here again, sorry, you haven't thought about this. You haven't probably thought the implications of that or you're ignoring the third-year track record. So some of that has been challenging. Yeah.